

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) An apparatus for producing seedlings comprising:

a closed-type structure ~~(2)~~ surrounded by light-interceptive thermally insulating walls;
multi-staged seedling culture shelves ~~(3)~~ provided with a plurality of shelf boards ~~(3a)~~
capable of mounting grafted seedlings ~~(8)~~ thereon, said seedling culture shelves being disposed
within said closed-type structure;

a plurality of an artificial lighting devices ~~device~~ ~~(5)~~ capable of projecting light onto the
grafted seedlings and a plurality of fans ~~fan~~ ~~(4)~~ capable of generating an air stream over each of
said seedling culture shelves, ~~said a respective~~ artificial lighting device of said plurality of
artificial lighting devices and ~~said a respective~~ fan of said plurality of fans being installed on
each of said seedling culture shelves;

an air conditioning unit ~~(6)~~ capable of controlling ~~the~~ a temperature and ~~the~~ a humidity
within said closed-type structure;

a carbon dioxide gas supply unit ~~(7)~~ capable of supplying carbon dioxide gas into said
closed-type structure; and

a light-transmitting shield ~~(9)~~ detachably disposed to cover the grafted seedlings mounted
on each of said plurality shelf boards of said seedling culture shelves,

wherein said light-transmitting shield includes ~~shield being provided with~~ a plurality of
vent holes ~~(15)~~,

wherein each of said plurality of vent holes includes a means for varying an open area of
the vent hole thereof,

wherein said light-transmitting shield includes side faces that are parallel to a direction of

a flow of the air stream, and

wherein said plurality of vent holes are formed in said side faces of said light-transmitting shield to generate a static pressure from the flow of the air stream, such that the static pressure provides a gas exchange between an inner space of the closed-type structure and an inner space of said light-transmitting shield.

Claim 2 (Cancelled)

Claim 3 (Withdrawn) A method of producing seedlings comprises: when grafted seedlings (8) are to be produced by using the apparatus for producing seedlings of claim 1, cultivating rootstocks and scions on the seedling culture shelves (3) of said apparatus; joining the cultivated rootstocks and scions with each other to prepare grafted seedlings; mounting the grafted seedlings on the shelf boards (3a) of said seedling culture shelves (3); covering the grafted seedlings on each of said shelf boards with the light-transmitting shield (9) provided with the plurality of vent holes (15); projecting light of a predetermined luminous intensity onto the grafted seedlings from the artificial lighting device (5) of said apparatus through said light-transmitting shield; controlling the temperature and the humidity within the closed-type structure (2) of said apparatus by the air conditioning unit (6) of said apparatus and supplying carbon dioxide gas into said closed-type structure by the carbon dioxide gas supply unit (7) while generating air stream over each of said shelf board by the fan (4) to thereby enable gas exchange between the inner

space of said closed-type structure and the inner space of said light-transmitting shield to be carried out through the vent holes of said light-transmitting shield; and
performing welding of the grafted seedlings under this condition(state).

Claim 4 (Withdrawn) The method of producing seedlings according to claim 3, wherein, by making controllable the rate of hole area of the plurality of vent holes (15) in said light-transmitting shield (9), the quantity of gas exchange between the inner space of said closed-type structure (2) and the inner space of said light-transmitting shield (9) through said vent holes are made controllable.

Claim 5 (Withdrawn) The method of producing seedlings according to claim 3, wherein the luminous intensity during the welding of the grafted seedlings (8) is set to between 150 and 350 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{s}$ in terms of the photosynthesis photon flux density.

Claim 6 (Withdrawn) The method of producing seedlings according to claim 4, wherein the luminous intensity during the welding of the grafted seedlings (8) is set to between 150 and 350 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{s}$ in terms of the photosynthesis photon flux density.

Claim 7 (New) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the apparatus includes a plurality of said light-transmitting shields, each of said plurality of said light-transmitting shields being mounted on a respective shelf board of said plurality of shelf boards.